



# MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

## TUNIS REGIONAL OFFICE



## PRESS RELEASE

### MEPI SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM REACHES GRASS ROOTS

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) has just completed its annual round of Small Grants, a key component of MEPI aimed exclusively at supporting local groups at the "grassroots" level on projects that contribute to reform and democratic growth in their countries.

From November 2005 to September 2006, a wide range of civil society organizations sought support for their project ideas from the MEPI Small Grants Program through applications submitted to U.S. Embassies throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In the five countries covered by the MEPI Regional Office in Tunis - Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia – 18 project proposals totaling \$617,936 were approved; a \$224,000 increase in this program's funding to these five countries over the previous round.

"This Small Grants program is a concrete demonstration of MEPI's commitment to supporting home-grown reform. We are responding to proposals from local groups whose objectives match those of MEPI," said Peter Mulrean, Director of the MEPI Regional Office. "It was great to see how many local groups and individuals are eager to contribute to democratic growth across this part of the region, and that they welcome the support the U.S. can lend to their project ideas," he added.

Some of the projects funded by MEPI during this round of Small Grants included a documentary film describing achievements of four women reformers in Algeria, a civic education campaign aimed at raising public awareness on political rights in Egypt, and an innovative approach to empowering youth through political engagement and education in Lebanon, among many others.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was launched by President Bush in 2002, and in four years has devoted more than \$293 million to programs in the region that support the spread of democracy, the growth of economies, improvements in education, and the empowerment of women.